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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 SINGAPORE 000271

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SUBJECT: SINGAPORE WELCOMES MTCR OUTREACH MISSION

REF: A. 2008 STATE 129729
[1](#)B. 2008 STATE 129731

[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: In the context of a regional outreach effort, Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) representatives met Singapore officials March 20 and exchanged briefings concerning the MTCR and Singapore's strategic goods control regime. GOS officials stressed the importance of working toward a "level playing field" in which the major Asia-Pacific ports apply similar strategic goods controls, and they welcomed a suggestion that MTCR hopes to harmonize control regimes in the region. GOS officials were noncommittal about whether Singapore is considering seeking MTCR membership. They acknowledged that traders and re-export businesses need to improve their knowledge of controlled items in order to make Singapore's strategic goods control regime more effective. Singapore continues to rely mainly on voluntary private sector compliance with strategic goods declaration and license requirements for transshipped and transit cargo. Singapore will amend its control list in April to match December 2008 changes in the European Union's control list. End summary.

Singapore Hosts Australian-Organized MTCR Outreach

[1](#)2. (SBU) Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) outreach program representatives exchanged briefings with Singapore officials responsible for strategic goods control on March [1](#)20. The MTCR representatives visited Singapore as part of a regional outreach effort that also included stops in Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta. The Australian High Commission organized the Singapore meeting, which was in two parts: (a) an overview and Q&A concerning the MTCR, and (b) an overview and Q&A concerning Singapore's strategic goods control regime. On the Singapore side, the meeting included officials from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Industry, Defense, and Home Affairs, as well as the Defense Trade Advisory Office of the Defense Science and Technology Agency (DSTA), the Immigration and Checkpoints Authority, and the National Environment Agency. PolOff attended as an observer, as did an officer from the Australian High Commission and two from the Russian Embassy (Counselor Konstantin Topilskiy and First Secretary Vladimir Shin).

Discussion of MTCR

[1](#)3. (SBU) Chair of MTCR outreach program John Quinn gave a brief overview of the MTCR. Quinn is Assistant Secretary in the Strategic Issues and Intelligence Branch, International Security Division, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Following Quinn's presentation, Brazilian diplomat Manuel Montenegro of the MTCR Technical Experts Meeting gave an equally brief overview of the MTCR Annex and control lists. The Singaporeans asked few questions. They

appeared most interested in references by Quinn to MTCR's desire to harmonize strategic goods control regimes in the Asia Pacific region. Subsequent comments from Singapore Customs indicated that there is concern within the GOS about having a "level playing field" among major regional ports with respect to strategic goods control.

Singapore as a Candidate for MTCR?

¶4. (SBU) At the end of the meeting, Quinn asked whether Singapore is considering joining MTCR, which prompted Customs and DSTA officials to ask what benefit Singapore would derive from joining. Quinn said that member states' legal and technical experts enjoy productive interactions under the MTCR framework, suggesting that Singapore could benefit if its experts participated in such exchanges. Head of Singapore Customs Strategic Goods Control Fauziah Abdul Sani responded by asking Quinn what MTCR members would think about Singapore joining MTCR. Quinn deflected the question, saying that Singapore would have to ask MTCR members directly for their opinions. Earlier, in response to Singapore's briefing on its strategic goods control regime (see below), Russian Counselor Konstantin Topilskiy had said that Singapore's experience shows that a country does not have to be a MTCR member to accomplish the MTCR goals.

Discussion of Singapore Strategic Goods Control Regime

¶5. (SBU) Singapore Customs gave a short presentation outlining Singapore's strategic goods control regime. The

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presentation was a standard set of slides Customs officials have used in other venues. Singapore's "key challenges" remain: (a) implementing export controls without adversely affecting trade; (b) dealing with its limited expertise in controlled items; (c) and being a small country with limited resources. The presenter also revisited the "level playing field" theme, emphasizing the importance to Singapore of other regional ports matching Singapore's strategic goods control measures. A DSTA representative pointed out that although Singapore's trained officials can recognize controlled goods and respond appropriately, traders and businesses dealing in re-exported items need to become more knowledgeable about what they are trading and better able to identify controlled items.

Reliance on Voluntary Declarations

¶6. (SBU) Quinn asked several questions about how Singapore handles strategic goods control for transshipped and transit cargo. (Singapore's presentation had not covered this issue.) Singapore Customs Head of Strategic Goods Control said Singapore mainly relies on shippers to make the required declarations and apply for any necessary licenses. However, Singapore Customs will also act based on receipt of specific intelligence about a particular shipment.

Singapore Amending Its Control List to Match EU Changes

¶7. (SBU) In a new development, Singapore Customs said Singapore will amend its control list in April to match the December 2008 changes to the European Union control list. There will be a six-month compliance grace period for the private sector to adopt the changes.

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